



Looking to Europe with hope

We, bishops representing the Bishops' Conferences of the 27 European Union member states, gathered for the 2025 Spring Plenary Assembly of COMECE in Nemi (Italy), and adopted the following Statement:

Gathered, in this Jubilee Year, as pilgrims of hope, we note with deep concern how the world is descending into a dangerous spiral. The rise in global tension, fomented by growing isolationism and a deepening of rifts, is eroding multilateralism and weakening democratic principles. This combination is resulting in ruthless competition and violent confrontations, often in blatant violation of international law. The ongoing war against Ukraine and the uncertainty faced by the Ukrainian people in light of recent geopolitical developments - to name but one of a number of violent conflicts and unstable situations worldwide - is a particularly tragic reminder of this very worrying reality.

As Christians, we believe in Jesus Christ, who is our Hope, and find comfort in his words: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you*" (Jn 14:27).

Mindful of significant commemorations this year - the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, the 75th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration and the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act - we call on European and world leaders to be inspired and guided anew by the spirit of these historic events and by the values that underpinned them. These landmark events serve as a witness for our times of how dialogue and cooperation, in pursuit of creative efforts for peace and rooted in the shared values of human dignity, solidarity, democracy and the common good, can foster unity and help to prevail over conflicts.

In these turbulent and unstable times, many are looking to Europe, and to the European Union in particular, hoping it will give a lead. We are with Pope Francis in seeing in Europe a 'promise of peace' and a 'source of development' for herself and for the whole world.

We recognise the need for a strong European Union capable of protecting, in these uncertain times, not only its citizens but also values championed in Europe and indeed across the world. We nevertheless believe that the EU's original vocation is to be a project of peace. Any necessary, proportionate and adequate investments towards European defence must therefore not come at the expense of efforts aimed at promoting human dignity, justice, integral human development and the care of Creation. Effective control mechanisms and a steadfast commitment to diplomacy are essential for preventing a dangerous arms race that would not serve the cause of peace, but only commercial interests.

In response to current shifts in the global economy and in the geopolitical landscape, we acknowledge the EU's efforts to enhance its competitiveness and its capacity for autonomous action. Nevertheless, we urge that these efforts do not undermine the EU's historical commitment to solidarity, especially with the most vulnerable regions of the world as well as with those suffering from poverty or those seeking refuge. Nor should such initiatives compromise the EU's credibility as a global leader in promoting human rights, social justice and environmental sustainability. Amid growing international polarisation, we emphasise the importance of preserving longstanding partnerships and alliances, while seeking to open up new processes of dialogue and cooperation.

As the European Union navigates these uncertain times, it is our profound hope that it will remain faithful to its founding principles and continue to act as a united, trustful and integrating force for its neighbourhood and for the world.

In this period of Lent, as Christians prepare for Easter - the feast of hope and renewal - we entrust Europe, in a particular way, to the Risen Lord Jesus, and call on the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace.

[Approved by the Assembly of COMECE in Nemi (Italy) on 28 March 2025.]